

CHAPTER III

TRANSPORTING 10,000 MEN A DAY

SENDING THE TROOPS OVERSEAS

DURING the 19 months of our participation in the war more than 2,000,000 American soldiers were carried to France. Half a million of them went over in the first 13 months and a million and a half in the last 6 months. Within a few weeks of our entrance into the war we began, at the earnest request of our cobelligerents, to ship troops overseas. At first the movement was not rapid. We had only a few American and British troop ships chartered directly from their owners. During the early winter, as the former German liners came into service, embarkations increased to a rate of nearly 50,000 per month, and by the end of 1917 had reached a total of 194,000.

The facts as to the transportation of troops to France and back to the United States are presented in diagram 14, in which the upright columns show the number carried each month.

Early in 1918 negotiations were entered into with the British Government by which three of its big liners and four of its smaller troop ships were definitely assigned to the service of the Army. The results of this are shown in the increased troop movement for March. It was in this month that the great German spring drive took place in Picardy, with a success that threatened to result in German victory. Every ship that could be secured was pressed into service. The aid furnished by the British was greatly increased. It was in May and the four following months that the transport miracle took place. The number of men carried in May was more than twice as great as the number for April. The June record was greater than that of May, and before the 1st of July 1,000,000 men had been embarked.